

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 26, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
O'CONNOR
SHEEHAN
BENTLEY
KENNY
THOMAS

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR STRAINER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER

KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER

JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &
FISCAL SERVICES

SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY

GIRARD

SIMMES

SOKOL

STEC

TAYLOR

VANNESS

AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the July 25, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members. *A copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver apprised that Agenda Item 1 referred to the Overtime Report for the DSS, which was included in the agenda packet. She pointed out that the overtime incurred for the months of July and August were the lowest figures reported since January of 2007. Ms. Weaver stated that her staff had been doing a very good job of minimizing the amount of overtime used.

Mr. Kenny said that the reduction in overtime costs was duly noted and he stated that he was impressed with Ms. Weaver's ability to reduce the Child Protective Services (CPS) backlog figures in such a short amount of time. Ms. Weaver replied that the reason for the reduction was primarily due to the additional staff that had been hired to handle the workload. She added that most of the staff were now fully trained and able to perform the tasks assigned to them.

Proceeding to Agenda Item 2, Ms. Weaver presented two requests for travel, the first of which was for Tracy Terry, CPS Caseworker, to attend mandated Common Core Training in Albany, NY on various dates stretching from October through December of 2008. The second request, she stated, was to authorize Nicole Pustolka to transport two foster children, ages two and three, and their foster parents to the Albion Correctional Facility in Albion, NY for final parental visits as part of a surrender agreement. Ms. Weaver explained that the visit would take place during the month of October and that Ms. Pustolka's presence was necessary as this was to be a supervised visit.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve both requests as outlined above. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver apprised that Agenda Item 3 included a request to fill a vacant Caseworker position, base salary of \$33,590. She noted that the vacancy was due to an impending retirement that would occur on November 30, 2008 from the Adult Services Unit which was manned by a total of four Caseworkers.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Bentley to approve the request for discussion purposes.

Mr. Kenny asked what the State reimbursement rate for the position was and Ms. Weaver replied that she believed it to be approximately 65%. Mr. Thomas asked if the Adult Services Unit provided frequently used services and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively. She explained that one of the Caseworker positions was responsible for assessing and investigating each new referral to the Unit, subsequently determining if the person required long-term attention, at which point the case was passed on to one of the other three Caseworkers. Ms. Weaver apprised that many of the persons requiring assistance were the elderly who sought assistance with the actual payment submission for their utility and housing expenses, as well as those who required transportation to purchase groceries and other such necessities. She stated that as the elderly population continued to grow, the demand for the services provided by the Adult Services Unit increased also.

Mr. O'Connor stated that due to the dramatic turnaround in the DSS since Ms. Weaver's assuming the Commissioner position, as well as her ability to considerably reduce the costs incurred by the Department while increasing its efficiency, he had no issue with approving the request to fill the vacant Caseworker position.

Mr. Tessier called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant Adult Services Unit Caseworker position, base salary of \$33,590, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing with the agenda review, Ms. Weaver advised that Item 4 consisted of an informational item regarding pharmaceutical litigation. She explained that as a result of litigation filed pursuant to Resolution No. 39 of 2005, the first payment awarded to the County would be \$25,194.50. Ms. Weaver added that after the payment of attorney fees, the County would actually receive a total of \$21,597.50.

Mr. Kenny asked how many payments were anticipated and Ms. Weaver replied that this information had not been specified. She added that for the first quarter of the fiscal year the State had received \$24 million and the amount being forwarded was Warren County's share, which was based on spending. Ms. Weaver reiterated that the information she had received failed to indicate the number of payments anticipated or their amounts.

Agenda Item 5, Ms. Weaver stated, pertained to a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$612,000 to cover shortfall in funding. Ms. Weaver pointed out that the revenues associated with the transfer would remain the same; therefore, the Local Share cost of \$153,000 would be unaffected.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the request for transfer of funds as outlined above, and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Note: Subsequent to the meeting it was determined that the appropriate course of action to complete this request would be as follows:

- 1) *Amending the 2008 County Budget to increase and decrease estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$206,000 to balance the Social Services budget; and*
- 2) *Amending the 2008 County Budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of*

\$112,600 to balance the Social Services budget.

Copies of the corrected request forms are on file with the minutes.

Ms. Weaver briefly touched on Agenda Item 6, which consisted of an advisement that a proclamation had been received from Governor David Paterson with respect to the month of August being Child Support Month in the State of New York.

Continuing to Agenda Item 7, Ms. Weaver apprised that she was searching for work experience sites throughout the County for employable TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Family) and Safety Net program recipients. She noted that there were no costs associated with the work; however, she said, time and attendance would have to be recorded and reported to the DSS. Ms. Weaver added that many of the recipients would require supervision as some were sex offenders.

Mr. Kenny suggested that an email offering these services be sent to all Town Supervisors and Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, advised that she would be sure to do this.

Ms. Weaver apprised that Agenda Item 8 pertained to discussions on the possibility of developing an outreach program to be based in the Town of Warrensburg. She said she was seeking Committee approval to meet with Supervisors Goodspeed and Tessier to determine the staffing and equipment needs of the proposed facility.

It was the consensus of the Committee that Ms. Weaver should proceed in scheduling a meeting with Supervisors Goodspeed and Tessier as requested and that she should keep the Committee apprised of the situation.

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 9 consisted of an informational update regarding her recent meeting with City of Glens Falls officials respective to a 19 bed homeless/day shelter they were considering constructing. Mr. O'Connor, speaking as a Supervisor representing the City of Glens Falls, stated that he was unaware of these plans and asked if the anticipated source of funding for the project had been mentioned during the meeting. Ms. Weaver replied that grant opportunities were being researched for the facility and that two separate agencies had been contacted regarding their interest in providing case management services for the persons served. Unfortunately, she said, she had not brought her notes to the Committee meeting and did not have any specific information immediately available.

Mr. Tessier questioned why the facility would be limited to 19 beds and Ms. Weaver replied that if the number was increased to 20 or more, State certification would be required.

Discussion ensued with respect to the matter.

Resuming the agenda review with Item 10, Ms. Weaver apprised that the DSS was spending approximately \$25,000 per month on taxi services for medical transportation. She added that since May of 2008, 331 persons had been transported in this manner for medical reasons and she felt that there must be a more cost effective way to accomplish this transportation. Ms. Weaver suggested that they consider either using the Veterans van or dedicating one DSS vehicle to be used solely for medical transportation and increasing one part-time driver position to full-time to meet this need.

Mrs. Simmes entered the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

Mr. Kenny stated that the amount of money spent for medical transportation seemed excessive considering the number of people transported. Mr. VanNess interjected that the costs were high because a considerable amount of the transportation was for trips to the Methadone Clinic located in the City of Albany.

Kathy Baker, Fiscal Manager, apprised that they had previously been able to group the people requiring trips to the Methadone Clinic together and transport them in the same vehicle; however, she said, some of these people had received doctor's notes stating that the trip was too upsetting for them with other travelers. Therefore, Ms. Baker stated, individual travel arrangements had to be made for each of the people submitting a doctor's note, which made the travel much more expensive. She added that in some cases, the person being transported required counseling subsequent to their treatment, which meant that the driver waited for them, sometimes for up to two hours, before making the return trip home, which cost the County more money. Mr. Kenny asked if the medical transportation was mandated by the State and Ms. Baker replied affirmatively.

Mr. Kenny suggested that the County contract with a local physician to administer methadone treatments. He added that a trip to Albany from Warren County was approximately 90 miles round trip and there was an opportunity to save a considerable amount of money by offering the services locally and avoiding transportation costs. Ms. Baker stated that she was not sure if this could be done but noted that a meeting with representatives of Glens Falls Hospital was scheduled for later that day and they might be able to introduce this matter.

Mr. Kenny then questioned how the costs for transportation services were being absorbed by the County and Ms. Weaver replied that they were included in the Medicaid cap. Mr. VanNess asked if funds saved through a reduction in transportation costs could be used for other programs and Ms. Weaver replied affirmatively, specifying that the funds would have to be used in other Medicaid program areas.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Stec entered the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

Continuing to Agenda Item 11, Ms. Weaver apprised that the DSS had spent approximately \$336,000 on housing for the homeless since January of 2008. She stated that she sought to reduce this figure and had instituted unannounced spot checks on the individuals receiving this assistance by DSS Fraud Investigators. Ms. Weaver added that when fraudulent activities were detected, cases were closed and payments ceased, thereby saving County funds. She noted that since this practice had been instituted, seven cases had been closed. Ms. Weaver stated that she had apprised the Committee of this matter since they might be receiving complaints subsequent to additional cases being closed.

Mr. Kenny asked if there was any indication as to the State's position on requiring drug and polygraph testing for the people seeking housing assistance. Ms. Weaver apprised that each TANF applicant was required to complete a drug and alcohol screening questionnaire and if more than two questions were answered yes, drug screening was required. She advised that as part of the eligibility process, drug testing was mandated for any applicants that had been receiving temporary assistance for more than two years or had been homeless more than twice in the past year. Mr. Kenny questioned if random drug testing practices could be instituted for TANF recipients and Ms. Weaver replied that while they were permitted by the State to perform drug testing as part of the application process, she was not sure if they could mandate random drug testing. She added that any recipients who did not follow through with the mandated drug and alcohol treatment programs would stop receiving assistance and their cases would be closed. Mr. Kenny suggested that Ms. Weaver contact State officials to determine if random drug and polygraph testing procedures could be implemented in order to adopt stringent regulations for public assistance recipients.

Mr. Bentley pointed out that the employees of the County's Highway Department were subject to random drug testing and he felt that the County should be as strict with those persons receiving public assistance and Mr. Kenny agreed.

Ms. Weaver stated that Agenda Item 12 referred to discussion on the feedback she had received from the DSS Commissioners of other Counties offering discount prescription drug benefits through ProAct Inc. She apprised that ProAct Inc. appeared to offer great benefits to people without them and seemed to actually provide all that it claimed to. Subsequent to her research, Ms. Weaver said that she felt this would be a good program for the County to become involved with.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to authorize Ms. Weaver to take whatever steps necessary to initiate an agreement with ProAct, Inc. for a County discount card prescription program.

Concluding the agenda review, Ms. Weaver presented Agenda Item 13, which consisted of the listing of items pending from prior Committee meetings. She detailed the pending items as follows:

- 1) Ms. Weaver apprised that she was still awaiting further information from Frank Morehouse, Superintendent of Buildings, regarding the profitability of purchasing vehicles versus issuing mileage reimbursement;
- 2) Regarding the liability issues present in connection with transporting children in County vehicles used by DSS staff, Ms. Weaver said that she was awaiting further information from Paul Dusek, County Attorney;
- 3) Ms. Weaver advised that the letter to the State Legislature requesting that the OTDA (NY State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance) position be filled as soon as possible had been drafted on July 29, 2008. She added that this issue could be removed from the pending items listing.

Mr. O'Connor exited the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

Ms. Weaver stated that she had a final item requiring Committee action which had not been included on the agenda. She apprised that a resolution was required to authorize the Point of Entry (POE) agreement and application in the amount of \$108,000 for the Warren/Hamilton Counties Point of Entry program.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request to authorize an agreement and application for State funding in the amount of \$108,000 for the Warren/Hamilton Counties Point of Entry program. *Note: As per Resolution No. 662 of 2006 the DSS Commissioner has the authority to execute contracts on behalf of the Department without a Board resolution.*

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Thomas, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist